

REMARKS / DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

In the present response, claims 5 and 16 are cancelled without prejudice; and claims 1, 3, 4, 6 – 12, 14, 15, and 17 – 22 are amended. No new matter is added.

Claims 1 and 12 are independent.

Claim Objections

The Office objects to claims 1, 12, 15 and 21 because of a number of informalities. In the present response, claims 1, 12, 15 and 21 are amended to obviate this objection. No new matter is added.

Withdrawal of the objection to claims 1, 12, 15 and 21 is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §112

Under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, the Office rejects claims 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, 19, 20 and 22 for a number of insufficient antecedent bases in the claims. In the present response, claims 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, 19, 20 and 22 are amended to obviate this rejection. No new matter is added.

In the Office Action, page 4, the Office further alleged that the use of the phrase “is adapted to” in claim 14 renders the claim indefinite, citing the requirements in MPEP 2173.05(d). Applicants respectfully disagree and submit that claim 14 is definite because the phrase “is adapted to” does imply that the limitations following the phrase are required, and a skilled person in the art would not find that the phrase “is adapted to” as meaning that the limitations following the phrase are merely examples or preferences. However, for the purposes of advancing prosecution, in the present amendment to claim 14, the punctuation mark “:” is removed from the claim language in order to further clarify that the limitations following the phrase “is adapted to” are required.

Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, 19, 20 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §102

Under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and (e), the Office rejects claims 1, 3 – 12 and 14 – 23 over Nakahara et al. (US 2003/0018491), hereinafter Nakahara.

Applicants submit that for at least the following reasons, claims 1, 3, 4, 6 – 12, 14, 15 and 17 – 23 are patentable over Nakahara.

For example, claim 1, in part, requires:

“binding at least one user (P1, P2, ..., PN1) to the domain identifier (Domain_ID).”

In the Office Action, page 6, the Office alleged that Nakahara, paragraph [0200], discloses the above claimed feature. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Applicants submit that Nakahara does not disclose binding a user to the domain identifier. Rather, Nakahara, paragraph [0200], discloses that the license management unit “determines that the searcher X belongs to the user domain identical to that of its own if the function unit ID of the searcher X is registered in the domain list with reference to the list” [Emphasis added]. Nakahara, paragraph [0060], clearly indicates that the function units are devices, not users. That means the license management unit only binds the function unit ID to its domain, and determines whether the searcher using the function unit belongs to its domain based on the function unit ID registered in the domain list. That means the determination of whether the searcher belongs to a domain is merely by the possession of the function unit that belongs to the domain. However, the searcher X is not bound to the domain, because any other searcher who uses the same function unit will be determined as belonging to the domain of the license management unit, and if the searcher switches to another function unit with a different function unit ID, the searcher may be determined as not belonging to the domain of the license management unit. Therefore, Nakahara only teaches binding the function unit to the domain, but not binding at least one user to the domain identifier, as claimed.

In view of at least the foregoing, Applicants submit that claim 1 is patentable over Nakahara.

Similarly, independent claim 12, in part, requires:

“means for binding at least one user (P1, P2, ..., PN1) to the domain identifier (Domain_ID).”

Since claim 12 contains at least the similar distinguishing features as in claim 1, Applicants essentially repeat the above arguments for claim 1 and apply them to claim 12, pointing out why claim 12 is patentable over Nakahara.

Dependent claims 3, 4, 6 – 11, 14, 15 and 17 – 23 respectively depend from and inherit all the respective features of claims 1 and 12. Thus claims 3, 4, 6 – 11, 14, 15 and 17 – 23 are patentable for at least the same reasons discussed above with respect to each independent claim, from which they depend, with each dependent claim containing further distinguishing patentable features. Claims 5 and 16 are cancelled.

Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 3 – 12 and 14 – 23 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and (e) is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection and rejections of record, allow all the pending claims, and find the application in condition for allowance. If any points remain in issue that may best be resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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